

My name is Edward Creem. I am a member of the South District Board of Fire Commissioners.

I appear before you today as a Commissioner and a taxpayer to voice support for SB-799, AN ACT
CONCERNING THE SOUTH FIRE DISTRICT OF MIDDLETOWN.

Long before I was elected as a Fire Commissioner, simply as a taxpayer, I felt the State had imposed an unfair burden on South District taxpayers, expecting the District to provide fire protection to an area as large and diverse as what is generally known as Connecticut Valley Hospital. Starting more than a decade ago, others who have served before me on the Commission did seek, albeit without success, a solution to end this unfair burden.

Even when CVH had its own Volunteer Fire Department, response to the CVH campus by the career firefighters from South Fire District, was an absolute necessity, given the many shortcomings of the CVH Fire Department. Those included but were not limited to never knowing how many volunteers with varying skill levels would respond to each emergency and an apparatus fleet that consisted of retired apparatus from other departments, a fleet that ALWAYS resembled an antique fire engine display rather than a modern fire department.

Except for a period of time in the 70's and 80s when the CVH Department operated a 1943 Ladder truck that was retired from the Middletown Fire Department in 1969, the CVH department did not have a Ladder Truck, an essential piece of equipment given the fact that the campus has numerous occupied multi story buildings where an aerial device is needed for firefighting and rescue. In recent decades, the first due ladder has always been from South Fire District.

For South Fire, the CVH campus is one of the top potential fire loads and one of the top life safety threats within our jurisdiction. Given the number of buildings, their size, age, construction and occupancy, the CVH campus stands up there with Pratt and Whitney manufacturing and the two power plants as the properties in South District with the greatest fire potential and the CVH campus is unequalled within our district in terms of potential life safety due to the nature of the occupancy of the many buildings.

Given the size of the sprawling CVH campus, I believe the State of Connecticut has a moral obligation to South District taxpayers to contribute something toward the cost of maintaining fire protection . If we look at fire protection like any other service provided to the state by an outside vendor, the solution proposed in SB-799, a fee for service arrangement, appears to me to be the most equitable way to give South Fire District taxpayers some relief from the unfair burden they have been shouldering over the years.

Therefore, I ask your support of this proposed legislation, SB 799.